

Advocacy Matters! Building Strong Coalition Members

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Advocacy

- Public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.
- A political process by an individual or a large group which normally aims to influence public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions; it may be motivated from moral, ethical or faith principles or simply to protect an asset of interest.

An Effective Advocate Needs:

- Knowledge of the issues
- Knowledge of the process and rules (legislative or organizational)
- An understanding of when, why and how to communicate with elected officials and decision makers
- PASSION FOR YOUR CAUSE!!!

To Produce Changes in Public Policy You Must:

- Identify the issue
- Identify your target
- Find/suggest solutions to the problems
- Advocate for change in order to build support for acting on both the problem and the solution

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

- Lobbying usually involves attempting to influence legislation
- Advocacy covers a broader range of activities that may include lobbying
- Most nonprofits advocate for change much more than they engage in lobbying

ANNUAL EXPENDITURES	OVERALL LOBBYING LIMIT
\$500,000 or less	20%
\$500,000 to \$1 million	\$100,000 +15% of excess over \$500,000
\$1 million to \$1.5 million	\$175,000 +10% of excess over \$1 million
\$1.5 million to \$17 million	\$225,000 + 5% of excess over \$1.5 million
Over \$17 million	\$1,000,000



Texas Government

- The Texas Constitution, and state statutes and appropriations, determine which programs are established and funded
- The Texas Legislature establishes the policies and budgets affecting most governmental and voluntary health and human services programs in Texas

Health and Human Services Commission

- Oversees the operations of the health and human services system
- Provides administrative oversight of federal HHS programs
- Provides direct administration of some programs

HHSC Departments

- Department of Family & Protective Services
- Department of Assistive & Rehabilitative Services
- Department of Aging & Disability Services
- Department of State Health Services



The Texas Legislature

- Biennial sessions in odd-numbered years
- Limited to 140 calendar days
- Two legislative bodies:
 - Texas State Senate
 - Texas House of Representatives
- The Governor may call a Special Session of the Legislature, which is limited to 30 calendar days

The Texas Legislature

- Texas Senate
 - 31 Members, ½ of whom are elected every two years for four-year terms
 - Lt. Governor, elected in a state-wide election every four years, presides over the Senate

The Texas Legislature

- Texas House of Representatives
 - 150 members, elected every two years
 - Speaker of the House, elected by a majority vote of House members each session, presides over the House

How a Bill Becomes Law in Texas

Anyone may draft or suggest legislation – legislators, state agencies, advocacy organizations

How a Bill Becomes Law in Texas

- During a regular legislative session, a bill is effective on the date written into the bill
- If an effective date is not written into a bill, it becomes effective September 1st of the year in which it passed



Effective Communication

- The key to effective advocacy is "be prepared"
- Develop a one to two page "fact sheet" for each priority issue
- Explicitly ask for action
- Be specific refer to bills by name and number
- Always say thank you!

Public Hearings and Testimony

- Public hearings are an opportunity for individuals and organizations to express their opinions to legislators
- Notices of hearings are published on the appropriate website
- Sign up for email notification of hearings by specific committees
- Notice for a public hearing may be less than 48 hours

Public Hearings and Testimony

- Provide testimony when you are knowledgeable about an issue and are prepared to answer questions
- Prepare two versions:
 - One to deliver verbally (under 5 minutes)
 - A longer written version to give to the legislators (take 15-20 copies)
- If not testifying, fill out a testimony card

Public Hearings and Testimony

- Tips for developing testimony:
 - Be succinct
 - Do not make claims you cannot defend
 - Familiarize yourself with the issue and how its affects your organization, etc.
 - Gather data, including pertinent statistics, but keep them brief

Personal Visits

- Meetings with legislators and their staff members are the most effective way to get your message across
- Make an appointment and arrive early
- Avoid acronyms and "buzzwords"
- Take copies of the "fact sheet"
- During session, work closely with staff members in the Austin office
- Follow up with a thank you letter!

Letters

- Write letters when truly necessary and keep to one page whenever possible
- Clearly state why you are writing, the action requested and when
- If writing about a specific bill, include its identifying information
- Use the proper form of address
- Include your full name and address
- Send via regular mail; fax if necessary
- Thank them for their attention to your letter!

Phone Calls

- Make a call when:
 - Time is of the essence
 - To say thank you to the legislator and/or his or her aides
- Know what you want to say
- Identify yourself
- Identify the bill
- State your position and what you want the legislator to do
- Conclude by saying thank you!

Email

- Not the most effective method of communicating with legislators
- Try not to send a letter as an attachment
- Use only when time is of the essence
- Identify the message's subject in the "Subject" line, e.g., House Bill 2
- Do not "stuff" a legislator's inbox messages will be ignored

Email

- Effective uses of email:
 - Sending "action alerts" to advocates
 - Sharing information on an issue with other agencies or groups
 - Sending notices for public hearings or issue meetings to advocates



Our Mascot: The Honey Badger





Where can I get information?

- http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/
 - -Who Represents Me?
- http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/
 - -TX Leg online
- http://www.afj.org/
 - -Alliance for Justice
- http://www.texashiv.org/
 - -Texas HIV/AIDS Coalition
- http://www.taepusa.org/
 - -Treatment Access Expansion Project
- http://www.hivhealthreform.org/
 - -HIV Health Reform